~~St Louis~~ Jefferson, November 30, 1863.

My Dear Garrison:

I would most gladly unite with the friends of freedom in commemorating the return of our government to the doctrines on which it was founded. For half a century the powers which had been ordained to secure liberty were prostituted to the enslavement of mankind. The powers ordained to secure life were prostituted to the destruction of human existence: and our free government was transformed into a slaveholding Oligarchy.

Amid the moral and political darkness which then overshadowed our land, the voice of humanity was at length faintly heard. Its utterance became more and more distinct, until at length the high and holy truth, that "all men hold from the Creator a right to live, a right to that liberty which is necessary to protect life, acquire knowledge, enjoy happiness, and prepare for heaven," was heard in our Congressional halls.

A quarter of a century has not yet elapsed since the duty of separating our federal government and the people of the free States from all support of slavery, was first proclaimed in our national legislature. The policy was so palpably just, so obviously in accordance with the Constitution, and constituted such a distinct re-iteration of the doctrines enunciated by the founders of our institutions, that the advocates of slavery have never attempted to meet it with argument. Threats, intimidation, slander, violence, war and bloodshed have constituted the weapons with which they have attempted to stay the tide of Christian civilization. They have beset in history the pathway of reform with civil war, with rebellion unequalled

81

Joshua R. Giddings.
Jefferson, Ohio
Nov. 30, 1863.

the history.

During the last three years our people have raised, armed and sent to the field a million and a quarter of the best soldiers who have ever fought in the cause of freedom, at an expense of fifteen hundred millions dollars. In no age, in no clime, have any people made so great a free willing sacrifice for liberty; While the nations of Europe have stood with folded arms, looking upon this mighty conflict, boasting that they took no interest in this war between slavery and freedom, that they neither encouraged one, nor condemned the other.

~~At length the President's proclamation of emancipation~~ Within the last two years, our people have purified themselves from slavery and they have made in the district of Columbia and in our territories, and the President's proclamation of emancipation has repudiated the institution in ten sovereign States, while in four others slavery lingers only in name. Within that time three millions of degraded bondmen have been legally elevated to the enjoyment of those rights which the Creator bestowed upon them. Heaven itself may well rejoice, and all good men will thank God, take courage, and re-engage in the great work with increased zeal.

I regret to say that from the length of time and the severity of my own labors, I have fainted, fallen and been borne from the field of conflict, but as I linger upon the verge of time, I still rest my dimmed vision upon the battle as it still rages, and my last prayer shall be for the heroes of justice and liberty.

I pray you to express to the members of your society the assurance of my affectionate regard

Very faithfully your friend

Joshua R Giddings

Joshua R Giddings